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The Long Island FISHERMAN

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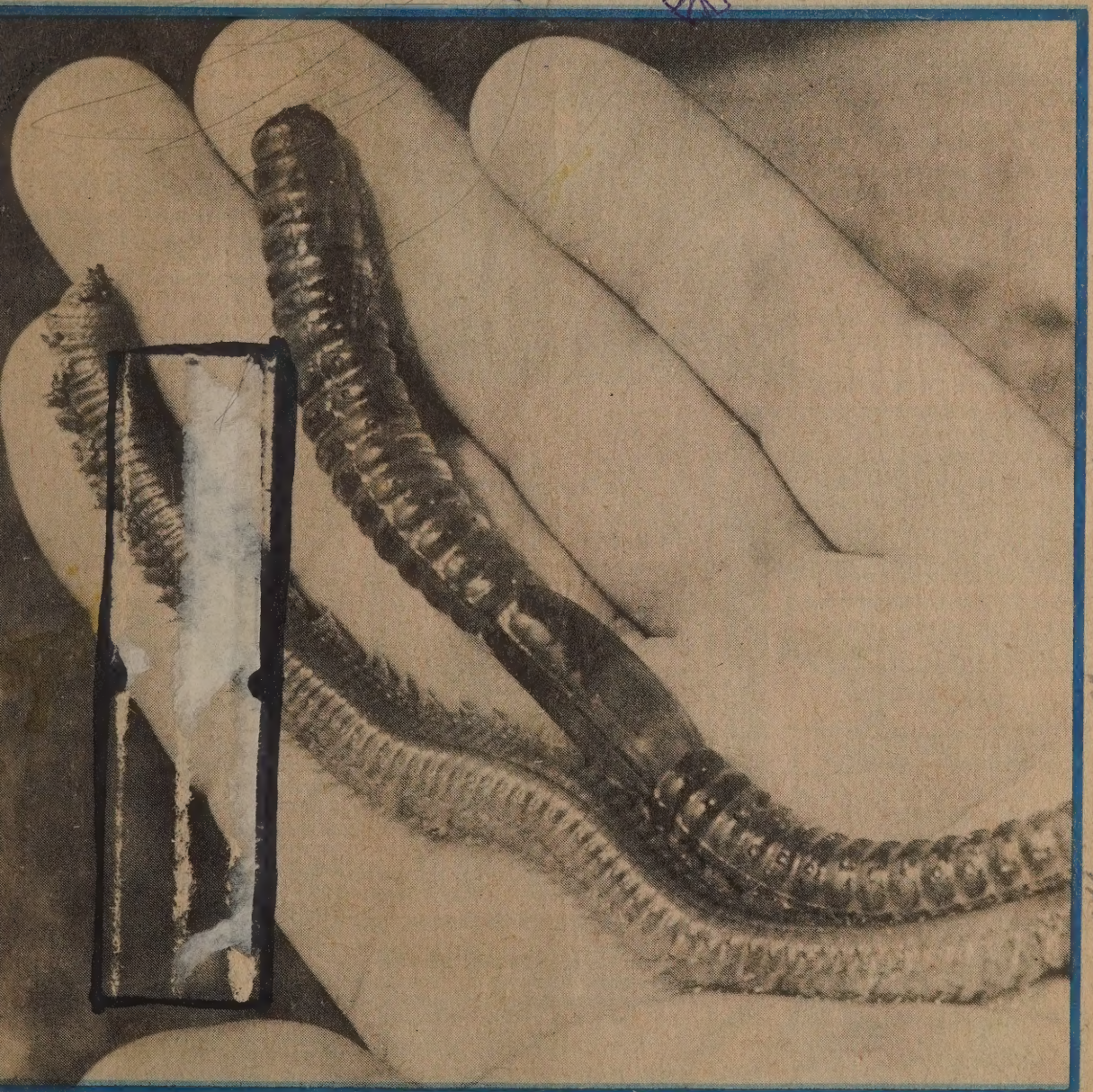
The Difference Between Just Fishing and Catching Fish!

JANUARY 5, 1978 ISSUE NO. 1



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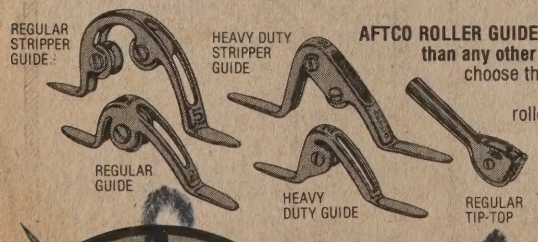

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You're in for a treat: a totally new sportfishing and outdoor exposition strictly related to the interests of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania sportsmen is scheduled for this winter, January 18 through 22, 1978.

Several bold innovations make this new show different. Most important, it will present only exhibits and programs of value to sportsmen. No rug beaters, vibrating bath tubs or eyeglass washers will be present. Secondly, there won't be any carnival atmosphere "entertainment." Instead, the First Annual World Fishing and Outdoor Exposition at Rockland Community College Field House, Suffern, New York, will feature numerous clinics, films and demonstrations by both local and national fishing and outdoor experts.

The location was deliberately selected to make a trip into New York City unnecessary—yet it's within easy reach, a short drive off Exit 14B of the Thruway, one exit from the intersection of the N. Y. Thruway (I-287) and the Garden State Parkway. It makes for easy access for sportsmen from New Jersey, New York, Long Island, Connecticut and Eastern Pennsylvania.

Show hours are 2 PM to 10 PM, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, January 18, 19 and 20; 10 AM to 10 PM, Saturday, January 21; and 12 Noon to 7 PM, Sunday, January 22. Admission at the door will be $3 for adults and $1 for children 12 years or younger. There are no additional charges for the clinics. Advance tickets will be offered through hundreds of local rod and gun clubs. And there will be acres and acres of free parking.

Special sections of the show will be devoted to fishing tackle and all the related gear, fishing boats and their accessories, outfitters, guides and lodges, as well as hunting equipment. A demonstration pool in the main exhibit hall will be the scene of tackle demonstrations throughout each day, and show-goers may try out equipment themselves. For further information, write Paul Fuller, Box 364, Portsmouth, N.H. 03801.

ANNUAL BEACH STABILIZATION EFFORT

Each year the Great South Beach Mobile Sportfishermen, Long Island Beach Buggy Association, and others, in conjunction with the Suffolk County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation join together in a dune restoration and stabilization project known as Operation Christmas Tree.

The name of this project comes

The Long Island FISHERMAN

The Difference Between Just Fishing and Catching Fish!

VOL. 13, NO. 1 JANUARY 5, 1978

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COMING NEXT WEEK:

SAND SPIKES

About the Cover—

Will the real worm please stand up! Plastic worms are the most life-like lure that can be used for any fish in fresh or salt water. Side-by-side, they are quite realistic, as can be seen in this photo. To find out more, see Dick Mermon's article "Plastic Worms," on page 20 of this issue.

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Al Ristori CONSERVATION EDITOR

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Stu Miller LOCAL ADVERTISING MANAGER

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Tim Coleman NEW ENGLAND EDITOR

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EDITOR'S HEAD

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The Fisherman in Winter

Here at The Fisherman, the winter passes slowly. We spend the early part of these long, cold months reliving past triumphs and, oh yes, those miserable disappointments and failures. The remainder of the winter we plan for next year's strategy. These are fishing resolutions.

For the umpteenth millionth time, Scott will promise to take me up on the challenge of exploring new territory at Montauk that is likely to produce doormat fluke consistently, and of course, next year we will concentrate on the same old territory.

For the umpteenth millionth time, I will promise that I will do more baitfishing from the beach because I am really getting hungry for that fifty pound cow. I must admit that I broke out the bunker more this year than ever before, but result was bluefish and not bass!

Does any of this sound familiar? We all resolve that we will do things better next year. To that end we will purchase some new equipment, refurbish some of the older stuff, and build a few rods here and there. But in the end, the reels won't be stripped, cleaned, and made ready for next year until a few days before our first trip. Not you, you say? You're already done with all that mundane work? Well, good for you pal—you're a better man than we are!

Anyway, it's January; Christmas is over, and if you were lucky, maybe some piece of tackle came your way via good Old St. Nick—but regardless, the cabin fever begins to grow. What is it that we do in winter? How did we survive last year's boredom? By now we're snapping at the kids, the wife is ready to ship us to Florida so that we can catch a fish and leave her alone; our colleagues on the job are convinced that we are really Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde all in one, and the TV shows are starting to smell like last year's bait.

Norman Vincent Peal was an advocate of the power of positive thinking. So, let's do something positive. Such as? How about a nice relaxing day on a codfish headboat. A day out on ten-foot seas acquiring a case of the frostbite is always a good cure for cabin fever and a way to put a little "bacon" on the table.

Join a fishing club. Local clubs are looking for new members during the off-season and a quick check of our Club News section should point the way in the right direction.

How about fulfilling a promise that you have made to yourself again and again and become active in The New York Sportfishing Council. Here's a chance to stay busy and at the same time do something worthwhile for the environment and the quality of our sportfishing!

Think about purchasing some new equipment. Take that Christmas money and invest it in the future of your fishing. Do it in the winter while you have the time to shop around and get the best price. Compare features as well as price to make sure that the equipment that you buy will serve your needs well!

Visit area boat shows. A visit to the boat show provides the opportunity to make tackle and boat-motor comparisons. All of that great stuff is organized in one place. Bring the family and have the added bonus of a little winter family-type fun.

Build a rod. Once you try your hand at rod building you will be into an activity that never ends. Each winter you can repair or make rods that will consume many pleasurable evenings.

Building something for your boat. There are many choices. A mounting for a piece of electronics is a good place to start, or build a fish box, baitwell, or storage compartment.

If you're as careless as I am about my fishing records, a good long look at the fishing log for 1977 will probably provide a lot of information that will help you to catch more fish in 1978. I usually get the information down before I forget, but finding the time to analyze it is a problem. Make a graph—month by month—of your fishing success so that you can determine when and where your fishing effort was most greatly rewarded. Of course there are other bits of information that can be gleaned from our logs, if we take the time this winter to find them.

Well, there are a few ideas that may help you stay out of trouble this winter. And that is—at least in its essence—the philosophy of our eight special issues this January and February. All of the above items will be given some coverage, and it is our sincerest hope that this slant to the publication more closely parallels the quality of your off-season. Let us know your thoughts after you have had a chance to digest these issues. Oh, and in-between issues, join us in a prayer for a good season in 1978!

from placing unsold Christmas trees—or for that matter discarded ones from homes—in the dunes to trap the sands that would normally cross Fire Island from the ocean to the bay and vice versa.

Operation Christmas Tree has been held each year for the past twelve years and the results are outstanding: the rebuilding of dunes and establishment of dunes where there were none before.

We would like to ask that you have a representative visit us while this is going on and record for the public that private individuals can work with government to preserve and protect a wonderful environment and natural resource.

The dates for this project will be the first three weekends in January, 1978 and more information can be obtained by writing P.O. Box 66, Patchogue, N.Y. 11772, Attn: Operation XMAS Tree.

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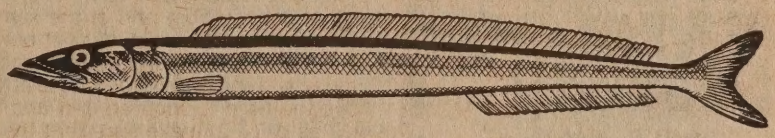
EDITORIAL CLARIFICATION: In the interest of avoiding any misunderstanding, the editorial staff of THE LONG ISLAND FISHERMAN wishes to point out that in Issue #43, November 10, 1977, on weakfish gillnetting, the use of the word "WE" refers to the editorial staff of THE LONG ISLAND FISHERMAN. It should NOT be concluded that the editorial staff of this publication wishes to make policy for either the weakfish/gillnet committee or the New York Sportfishing Council. Neither do we speak for the committee or the Council.

Editorials express the opinion of the publication and all comments should be regarded as expressions of that opinion and the word "WE" should always be taken to mean the editorial staff of THE LONG ISLAND FISHERMAN.



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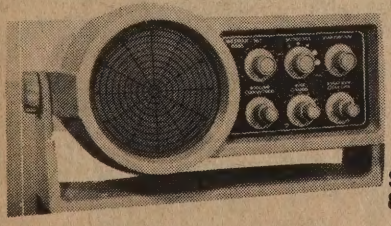

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BOATING

COAST GUARD SAFE BOATING COURSE

USCG Aux. Flotilla 14. 12-lesson Boater Safety Course, starting January 17, 1978 at 8 PM in Lindenhurst Jr. High School on South Wellwood Ave., Lindenhurst. For more information call: 516-226-3732 evenings. Max McIntosh, Flotilla Commander.

****

Flotilla 12-8, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, will begin its 12 lesson course on Boating Skills and Seamanship on Tuesday, January 3, 1978 at 8 PM at the Martin Van Buren High School in Queens Village. The course will be given by qualified instructors and will cover many aspects of boat handling. For early registration or additional information, call or write Merideth Borden, 27-14 Ericsson Street, East Elmhurst, New York 11366; telephone 212-424-3895.

USCG AUXILIARY ANNOUNCES TWO SAFE BOATING COURSES

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 13-8, 12-lesson Boating Safety and Seamanship Course and the New York State Young Boatmen Course at Seaford High School. Registration on Monday, Jan. 9; Tuesday, Jan. 10, and Wednesday, Jan. 11 at 7:30. Classes start on Tuesday, January 17 at 8:00. For information, call 781-3254.

****

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 13-8, 12-lesson Boating Safety and Seamanship Course and the New York State Young Boatmen Course at Bethpage High School. Registration on Monday, January 30 and Wednesday, February 1 at 7:30. Classes start on Tuesday, February 7. For information call: 781-3254.

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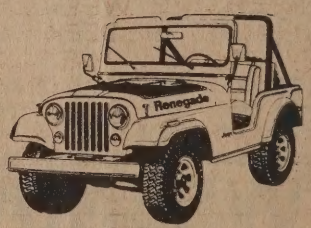

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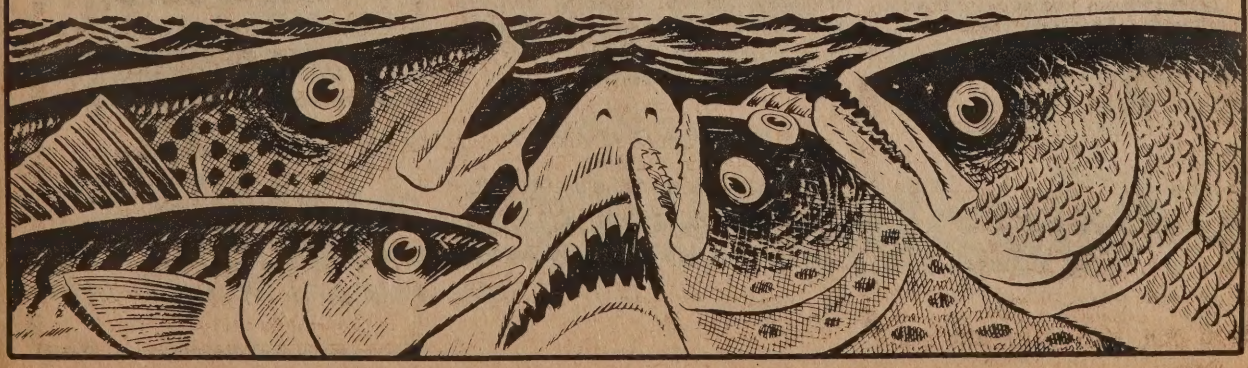

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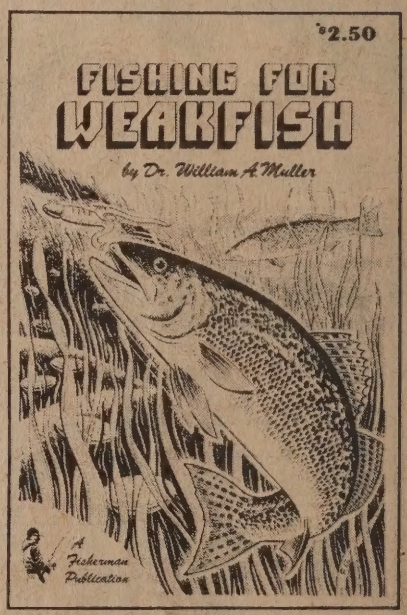

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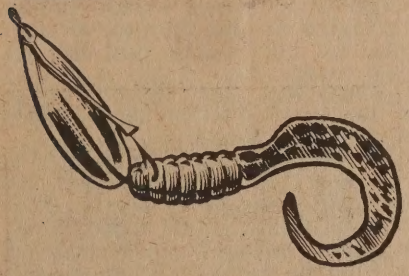
CLUB NEWS

FREEPORT TUNA CLUB ELECTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At the November meeting, the membership elected the following to serve as Directors during the coming three (3) years: Phil Buonavita, Sal Bebbia, Joe King, Sr., Dr. Sam Klein, John McCrea, Richard Mercogliano, Jack Swift and Bob Trapani.

1978 OFFICERS FOR FARRAGUT STRIPER CLUB

The Farragut Striper Club announces that its newly elected officers for 1978 are: John Fritz - President; Charles Wahl, Jr. - Vice President; Al Buccola - Secretary, and John Gorla - Treasurer.



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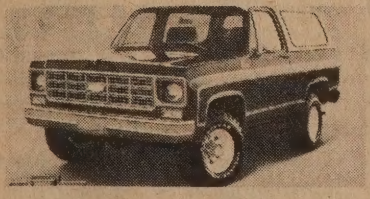

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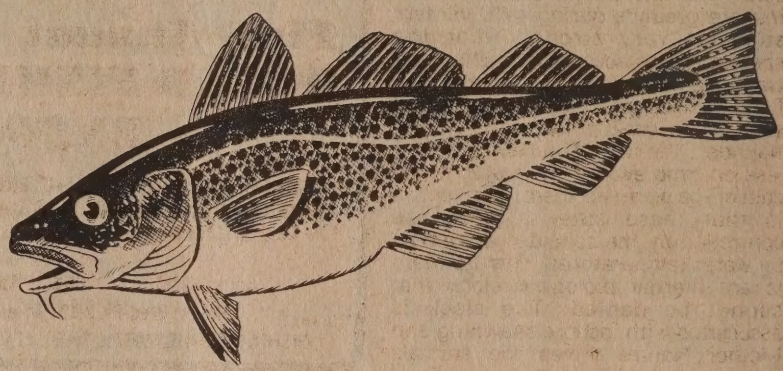
FISH TALK

with Dr. William A. Muller

★COD★

Gadus morhua



HOW ABOUT THAT FIRST SUGGESTION? So, you have decided to think positively and make a trip on a party boat for codfish. Good for you! I wish that I could come with you, but I'm very busy and if I did take you up on your invitation I would just get Doc Grell angry as hell! He's been trying to get me seasick for years now—it wouldn't take much!

SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT! I'm not much of a codfisherman, but I do admire the fish, what with their prolific habits and their impressive sizes. Well, we've been all through that in past columns. I thought perhaps that if we concentrated upon some of the more unique and perhaps remarkable characteristics and habits of the species that somewhere along the lines these tidbits of information might come in handy.

MOTIONLESS BAITS. That's all I've been reading about the last few issues of 1977. Both Doc Grell—who is a South Shore cod sharpie par excellence—and Scott Simons, who is no slouch as a bottom fisherman either, have expounded on the use of the motionless bait. When experts like these guys speak, I listen. Unfortunately, when I hear something like this I immediately must know why. It's the "why's" of my life that get me into trouble.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE! That is the question, said Shakespeare. But to be what? There is only one other species in my experience that sometimes responds to a motionless bait, and that's ol' mister flounder. However, most of the time the flounder prefers the bait bouncing vigorously. The codfish, however, only occasionally can be taken on a moving bait, and this is a situation of tolerance, not preference. Most of the time the bait mustn't move. Back to why? In essence, it is to be or not to be what you are! A cod is a cod is a cod. They are bottom feeders and here lies the key to the riddle.

SMELL IT AND FEEL IT—DON'T LOOK AT IT! As a very successful bottom feeder, the cod has been given a set of tactile feelers under the lower jaw by Mother Nature. Thus, it seems logical that a codfish will cruise slowly along the bottom allowing the feelers to pick up the trace of some delectable morsel. Now, if you were a cruising cod and suddenly saw a hunk of clam bounce in front of your nose, you, too, would probably be spooked and swim away. There are times—especially when they are feeding upon hordes of sand eels—that cod will jump on a moving bait. Such is the case at Montauk in the fall, when cod are taken while trolling umbrella rigs and also in the spring when these fish are caught with diamond jigs along with pollack. But on the open bottom characteristic of our South Shore and during the winter months almost everywhere, the cod want a "tame" meal.

TAGGING! Would you believe that over the decades of this century that tens of thousands of cod have been tagged in order to study the migration habits of the species? In one seven-year period alone, over 12,000 specimens were tagged off New England shores. Of these many taggings about 1,700 were recaptured. That's about a fourteen percent recovery rate—which is excellent. Poor recapture success gives a hint as to why I am not high on fish tagging as a super study strategy. Studies on the European side of the Atlantic indicate that migration patterns over in their neck of the woods are very similar to migration habits of the cod in our waters.

FOUR REASONS FOR MIGRATING! Codfish do migrate far and wide and they do so for four main reasons. These are: eggs and larvae carried by currents, movements of adults to find food, movements of spawning adults, and seasonal migrations back and forth between general areas. The drift of eggs and larvae is not unexpected and furthermore, this information can't help us very much to find or catch cod. Much the same is true for movements associated with finding food. If the food is plentiful and environmental conditions otherwise are to their liking, they will not move. However, the absence of bait will force movements to new areas. European cod seem to migrate a lot more in connection with spawning than do our codfish. There are believed to be about three major spawning areas in New England waters. These are: just north of Cape Ann in the Gulf of Maine, north of Cape Cod, and east-southeast of Nantucket on bottom that is known as Nantucket Shoals.

AH, IT'S SEASONAL MIGRATION THEN THAT BRINGS ME MY COD! Right! Large-scale tagging studies done in this century suggests that a certain portion of the stocks of cod from the Nantucket Shoals move into the waters off Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey during the late fall. They apparently winter on this open bottom because the water temperature is comfortable and because there is enough food here to sustain them. Water temperature is the key factor. These same tagging studies indicate that the bulk of the codfish stocks on the Nantucket Shoals do not migrate away from the area. Thus, it seems safe to say that the cod we fish for over inshore bottoms are strays, mavericks, oddballs, etc. They may be scouts that are slowly but continuously moving along in search of greener pastures. That may explain why catches from day to day can vary so much even when weather conditions remain unchanged and good. That may also explain why cod can be fished out of a wreck and then it may take some time before a new body of cod will take up residence there. What fisheries biologists are suggesting is that the whole process is an accident.

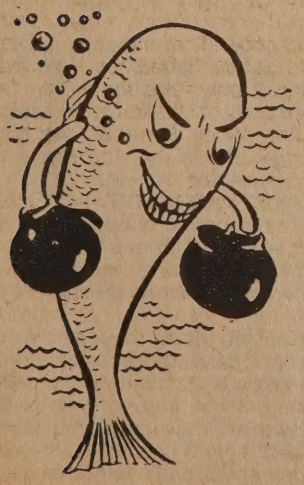
NON-MIGRATORY SPECIES!! Some fisheries biologists would thus argue that cod are not nearly the world travelers we would have imagined. That is, the bulk of a given cluster of cod may not migrate very far throughout the course of their lives. Many tagged cod are recaptured as large adults in the very place where they were originally tagged. However, it wouldn't be fair to say that they are non-migratory, because apparently built into the species is this tendency for some individuals to

wander far from home. It is these wanderers who stumble upon a wreck in their travels. Since the wreck offers security and food, they stay for as long as water temperatures allow. If the wreck is in deep water they will likely stay put for their entire lives—if they don't get caught first!

EXPLAINS STRANGE CODFISH SEASONS? What would happen if the winter was unusually mild? Unusually cold? The late arrival of cod on the inshore grounds during mild winters suggests very strongly that the species moves according to changing water temperatures. Of course, all fish do this, but with other species such as the weakfish, bass, fluke, and flounder, the fish will arrive more or less on time even if the water is too cold or too warm for them. The reason is that these other species are controlled by the calender as well as by water temperatures. That is, there is an internal biological clock that cannot be denied. The clock is associated with inshore spawning and Mother Nature drives the animals towards spawning even if condition are less than optimal. But the cod spawns in deeper water where the result of these drives will not be obvious to us.

FINALLY, LET'S SEE HOW LONG IT TAKES TO MAKE A COW! The following chart shows that the fish grows fast. Thus, it seems likely that codfishermen will see the benefits of the 200 Mile Limit before too many more years!

Age in Years	Average Lgth. [W. Atlantic]	Avg. Wgt. [lbs]
1	8	1
2	16	2¼
3	20	3
4	25	6
5	28	9
6	31	12
7	34	17
8	38	22
9	42	28
10	46	35



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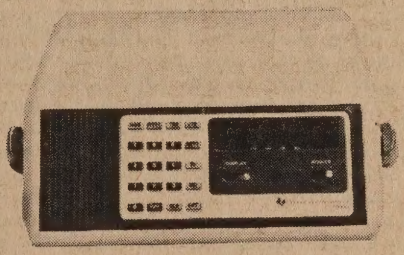

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Surf Side with John Fritz

Tie a Yellow Ribbon

Most of the experts agree that the striped bass fishery is in trouble. Whether the reason is a loss of spawning habitat, poor class years, overfishing, or a normal down-cycle, is a matter of much conjecture. In order to preserve as much stock as possible, restraint is advised in keeping only the fish one would put to good use.

Add to this the uncertainty of eating bass containing unknown quantities of poisonous PCBs and the case for releasing these fish becomes stronger. While most fishermen releasing fish simply remove their catch from the line and drop the fish back into the water, there are an increasing number of anglers who find it rewarding to place tags on these throwbacks.

Disregarding any possible scientific benefits from information compiled by this tagging, it is interesting to receive your letter in the mail stating that one of your tagged fish has been recaptured. You will learn from this letter the length of time you added to the fish's lifetime, how large it grew during that span, and most fascinating—the location of the final capture. The striper is a highly migratory fish, therefore, returns can be received from most coastal waters on the Eastern Seaboard from the Carolinas north to the Maritime Provinces. The more normal range lies between the Chesapeake and Cape Cod.

One of my returns was unusual in that this particular bass when caught in the Lilco outflow in March, was eighteen inches long and blind in one eye. In the same winter month two years later, this fish was recaptured in the Connecticut River, weighing five-and-a-half pounds, by a fisherman from New Zealand, here presumably on a visit. Aside from the ability of a half-blind fish to survive for over two years with the added hindrance of a tag, of special interest to me was the fact that for at least two winters in its life this fish wintered in Long Island Sound waters.

If two other surf species—bluefish and weakfish—are included in your tagging, a greater opportunity will be afforded those of us who do not catch large numbers of bass. The bluefish is another long distance traveler. One return which comes to mind is of a twenty-six inch blue caught by Charlie Wahl on Nantucket Island, October '75 which was taken a second time in Nagshead, North Carolina the following spring.

Tags can be obtained from the American Littoral Society, Sandy Hook, Highlands, New Jersey 07732. A kit including ten tags, a needle and ten recording post cards costs $3.50. The cards and tags are numbered so that after releasing a fish, the pertinent information can be noted in the appropriate spaces and sent to the Society for recording.

When a fish is recaptured you will receive a letter stating date, location, and name of party making the catch. Also returned to you will be the tag and the letter received by the Society from the lucky fisherman.

If you join the American Littoral Society, for a tax deductible $10 donation, you will receive a copy of their quarterly magazine "The Underwater Naturalist," which lists all tag returns received during the period between publications. This booklet also contains several articles relating to the saltwater scene which should be of interest to anyone with a concern for the coastal zone.

When tagging fish the needle, with the tag inserted into its hollow core, is pushed through the upper back behind the dorsal fin, taking care not to pierce the spine or the lateral line. After removing the needle, tie a simple knot in the end allowing ample room between the knot and the fish's body for growth. If the loose ends beyond the knot are too long they can be trimmed for a neater job.

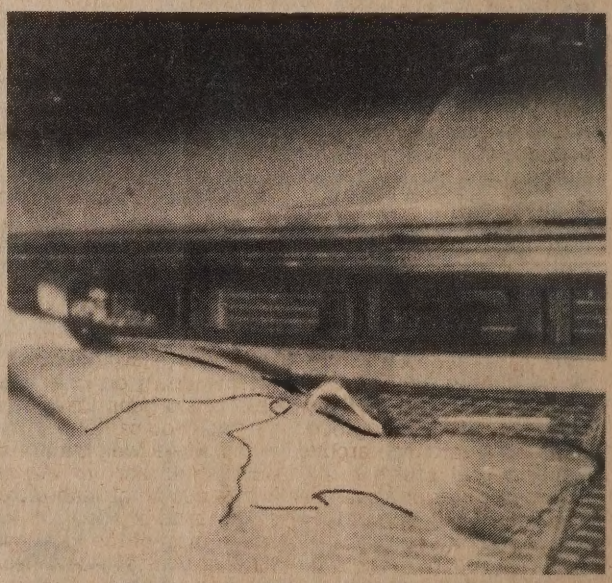
Any fish being returned to the water should be given a fair chance of survival. Naturally it can't be gaffed and preferably it should be lip hooked. Any deeply hooked fish should be kept for the table because of the damage incurred in removal. Often when fishing bottom with a single hook, it can be snipped off close to the shank and allowed to remain in the fish's stomach where it will disintegrate. Even here you are taking a chance because one does not know how much damage was caused while beaching the fish. If in doubt, keep the fish for the table; it is better than letting him rot for the crabs.

Bluefish, being the savage fighters they are, often tear themselves up in their bid for freedom. Any fish which is bleeding has a poor chance of surviving and should be kept.

Before you handle a fish to be released, wet your hands to prevent removal of the protective slime from its body. Likewise, do not allow him to roll in the dry sand, for this has the same effect. Remove the hook as gently as possible and after inserting the tag, carry the fish to the water and lower it upright permitting it to swim to freedom. Don't kick the fish along the beach into the wash

(Continued on page 14.)

The author carefully inserts a tag into a weakfish.



The author points out the fixed tag.

INSHORE FISHING

with Scott J. Simons

WINTER PROJECTS FOR FISHERMEN

You have just gotten through the easy part of the winter...the next two months won't be quite as easy. For most anglers, the last fishing trip of the year is usually in September or October, and usually you don't even know when the last trip of the year will take place due to the weather. And with the kids going back to school and things to fix around the house that have piled up because you neglected everything during the summer fishing months, the time passes quickly until, before you know it, the holidays are upon us. But once the holidays are over—as they are now—the winter boredom starts to set in. You haven't been fishing in a couple of months, and now you are starting to get an itchy rod again. But it will be at least two months before you can even think about catching a flounder, and as a result, the days of January and February have a way of passing agonizingly slow. To occupy this time and help the days pass a little more quickly, I'm going to suggest ten projects you can do in your leisure time—and all of them will pay off when the 1978 fishing season finally does get off the ground in March.

1. Rod Making. How about trying your hand at making a custom-made fishing rod? It's not hard at all, and if you follow the step-by-step instructions given in Doc Muller's seven-part Rod Building Series (starting in this issue), you will have a rod you can take pride in, in time for the first fishing trip. You may not save much money over a store-bought rod, but the rod you make to custom fit your physique and personality will make the rod feel like it is an extension of your arm. If you want to really get into the finer aspects of "rolling-your-own" rod, I strongly suggest that you send for the book "Fiberglas Rod Making," by Dale Clemens. It is available from The Fisherman's Library for $8. (See page 31 for ordering.)

2. Making Sinkers. Also in this issue of L.I.F., is an article on how to make your own sinkers. (See "Sinker Bouncing" by Matt Ahern on page 14.) To cut down on costs and receive a little help in the process, it's a good idea to go partners with a fishing buddy or two. You can either buy scrap lead, scrounge around for old wheel weights at gas stations or, if you're lucky, your fishing partner will be either a printer or a plumber with a source of lead at his disposal. (Don't forget to offer his boss a share of the sinkers.) Molds can be purchased at most of the local bait and tackle shops. Warning: whatever your source of lead is, make sure it is absolutely dry before using. If you throw a wet piece of lead into a pot of molten lead, you will have a nice explosion that will leave you looking like the man in the iron mask.

3. Making Molds. To go one step further than No. 2, how about making your own molds out of plaster of paris? In L.I.F. Issue #5, The Fisherman is running an article that will tell you a simple method of making a mold out of plaster of paris so that you can cast just about anything you want—bucktail heads, salty dog heads, sinkers, drails, buoy weights, diamond jigs, you name it.

4. Tying Rigs. The next couple of months will provide you with the ideal opportunity to tie up enough bottom rigs for the coming fishing season. Why waste precious fishing time tying rigs when you can do it now at home while watching the boob tube? Take a ride down to your local bait and tackle shop and pick up a good supply of barrel swivels, leader material and whatever other components you normally use on your rigs. (I hope there aren't too many.) Tie the rigs with the dropper loops in the correct positions for hooks, but don't put the hooks on. Storage of rigs is much easier if you just keep the bottom rigs coiled up, the hooks to be added later when the rig is actually going to be used. While on the subject of purchasing tackle, it's a good idea to visit your local tackle shop once a week and pick up a couple of dollars worth of tackle you know you will need during the fishing season each time. In this way, you will replenish your tackle box gradually, rather than doing all your purchasing at one time in the spring when you may wind up with a bill that will knock the socks off you.

5. Making Chum Pots. In Issue #3, my column will be covering some of the many items you can make with wire mesh. With a little patience and ingenuity, you can fashion your own chum pot, killie or live bait car, bait trap, etc., that can be as good as, if not better, than those purchased.

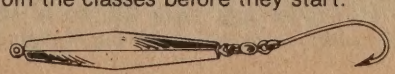
6. Cleaning reels. It's January—do you know where your reels are? Hopefully, they're not in a closet or the garage where you casually threw them at the end of your last fishing trip in 1977. If they are, get them out now and strip them down. Look for worn parts, like bail spring, drag washers, dog ears, pinions, gears, etc. Order any replacement parts you need now, because it may take a few weeks to get them. If the reel needs professional servicing, give it to your local authorized dealer now—don't wait for the spring rush. Remember, the cause of most damage to reels is simple neglect. So clean it up good, replace parts, and lubricate the parts that need it....and don't forget that one drop of oil in the right place is worth more than two drops alongside.

7. Heat Tubing. Heat shrinkable tubing is remarkable material to work with and has a wide variety of uses for fishing. In Issue #8, this column will cover many of these applications; such as how you can use the tubing (which comes in various colors) to refurbish and give new life to those diamond jigs that are chipped and dull-looking.

8. Build A Smoke House. Even if you are a non-eater of fish, like myself, you may be surprised to learn you like fish that has been smoked. And it's even more fun when you smoke the fish yourself. In Issue #3, L.I.F. will have an article telling how to build your own smoke house for a nominal cost, as well as give instructions on how to smoke mackerel, whiting, eels, tuna, bluefish—just about anything that swims.

9. Boat Repair. If you own your own boat, I'm sure that you can find more work to do than desired to pass the winter months. After the normal wear-and-tear repairs have been made, give a little thought to doing some custom work on the interior of the boat for fishing purposes. Do you need more rod holders, or should a few be repositioned? How about building a new fish box? Need a new compass, radio, depth recorder or anything else installed? Now is the time to start working on these ideas—don't make the mistake of waiting for warm weather when it's pleasant to work outdoors. Warm weather means the fishing season is about to start, so why waste time?

10. Education. There are many ways of increasing your knowledge and expertise in fishing without being on the water. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't learn about fishing from a book—not only can you, but it is one of the better ways of learning. The Fisherman's Library offers many good selections, or you can read your back issues of The Fisherman, Salt Water Sportsman, etc. If you own your own boat or go out on private boats a lot, it might be a good idea to take one of the free boating courses given by the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Power Squadron. Watch for the announcement of a class starting in your area under the "Boating" banner in the beginning of this magazine. Or take one of the courses offered for a fee which are considerably more advanced. (See the ads on page 27 of this issue.) The Babylon Tuna Club gives a course on basic fishing for a nominal fee, and it has graduated thousands of anglers. (See announcement on page 7 of this issue.) Montauk charterboat Captain and bass fisherman, John DeMaio is giving a six-lesson advanced fishing course for a fee, which will start shortly. THere are still a few seats left in these limited classes, so give the Captain a call at (516) 668-5130 if you want to join the classes before they start.



Well, now that winter is here, what are your plans while awaiting those first faint stirrings of Spring? Will you become a captive of the idiot box as you champ at the bit? I hope not. As a dedicated fisherman, you should be thinking of ways to get more enjoyment out of your sport during this brand-new year now before us.

Therefore, with that in mind, the next eight columns will consist of "How To" articles. These will cover such subjects as fishing aboard party boats, cleaning fish, keeping fishing records, becoming a master fisherman—and even how to fail as a fisherman, etc. All with the primary purpose of helping you put more fish in your bucket. For starters, we'll delve into sinker making. This is certainly important to today's fisherman. Along with everything else, the cost of fishing has also risen. Sad to say, there are no more fifty cent rowboat rentals, and no more one dollar party boat fares. Oh! Long gone days of my happy youth. But, there are ways to keep today's fishing costs down.

Sinker Bouncing

with Matt Ahern

How-to MAKE SINKERS

One of these is to make your own sinkers. Especially does this apply to the bottom fisherman who does much fishing around wrecks and other obstructed bottoms where the mortality rate on terminal tackle can be high. When I think of the penny an ounce charged for sinkers against the going rate of eight cents in some areas, I know we fishermen must do something to help ourselves.

Fortunately, sinker making is not only easy, but it is an enjoyable pastime. All that's needed is scrap lead, an old aluminum pot and ladle, a constant supply of heat, and a mold that will cast the weight and type of sinker desired.

Scrap lead is often obtainable from salvage and junk yards. Neighborhood service stations that do wheel balancing also provide an excellent source. These stations often have a supply of used lead weights kicking around. Some charge a nominal fee, and some will gladly give them away. If you happen to be a regular customer, you've got it made.

Perhaps you know your local plumber well. These hard-working gentlemen seem always to have scrap lead around the shop. Do you belong to a rifle club? This is a ready source of lead. Just dig it out of the sand trap.

Sinker molds are manufactured to suit all fishing requirements, from tiny split-shot to huge six-pound cannon balls for Pacific salmon fishing, and ranging from egg-shape to pyramid. Most tackle shops and mail-order tackle companies can supply the mold of your choice.

Aluminum molds are satisfactory; those made of cast iron cost more, but hold the heat longer, enabling you to work faster. If interested in cast iron molds, drop a card requesting a catalog to: Reading Instrument Co., P.O. Box 78, Reading, Pa. 19603.

Electric hot pots are also available. These are convenient, but I've never found them necessary for my use. I use an old aluminum pot and a ladle deep enough to hold about a half-pint of molten lead and have always had satisfactory results. Any gas or electric stove will supply the temperatures needed.

Before pouring, it is advisable to place the mold over the heat source for a minute. Once hot enough so that the lead will pour through the cavities without congealing, it is only occasionally when reheating becomes necessary. The secret of pouring sinkers quickly and easily is to have the lead at the correct temperature. Too cold and the lead will not flow freely throughout the cavity; too hot and it will seep through the bottom at the joint. It will take a few minutes to find and adjust the heat needed to do a satisfactory job.

Molten lead splatters, so be sure to have the work area clean and clutter-free. Have nothing in the way that may interfere with your transfer of the molten lead to the mold. Have a piece of scrap board handy on which to rest the mold as you pour. It is important for safety that all cold lead dropped into the pot be moisture-free.

Fill the ladle with enough molten lead so that you can pour the cavity without stopping to refill. Should you hesitate while pouring, your sinker's appearance will leave much to be desired. It's a good idea to skim off all dirt forming on the surface of the hot lead. The ladle will pour easier if you do.

The sinker is formed in seconds. Use a screw driver or similar tool to pry open the mold and remove the sinker. Then grasp firmly with a pliers and drop your newly-cast sinker into a bucket of water. Just be careful—that sinker is hot!

When you've poured all your sinkers, you'll find it sometimes necessary to de-burr the eye holes. This is another advantage of making your own sinkers. This important step is rarely completed on those sinkers you buy in tackle shops and is one reason their loss is so high. Those left-behind sharp edges cut into the monofilament loop and the least pressure is apt to cause a lost sinker. Granted, bottom fishermen lose a lot of sinkers anyway, but why go out of your way to make it easy.

I do this de-burring with my pocket knife's awl blade after the sinkers have cooled. It takes but minutes and is well worth the effort.

As you can see, making sinkers is no great problem. Not only do you save a hard-earned buck, but just the fact of knowing there are plenty of sinkers in your tackle box has a psychological effect on your fishing. You can fish those obstruction-littered places known to harbor large fish with no concern. What does it matter if you lose a dozen sinkers a day—you've got plenty more where they came from.

Surf Side: YELLOW RIBBON

(Continued from page 12.)

as I have witnessed many times in the past when shorts were plentiful.

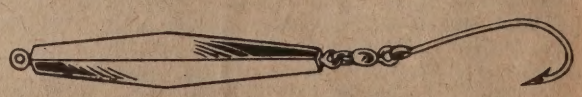
If the fish turns belly up, further help is necessary to send him safely on his way. Water must be forced through his gills by gliding the fish head first through the water until sufficient strength has returned to permit him to swim unaided. In the case of striped bass, a thumb can be hooked into his lower jaw so that he can be pulled back and forth through the water. For blues and weaks, a cradle can be fashioned around its body with your hands to achieve the same effect.

In order to facilitate the speedy return of the fish to the water, tags should be carried on your person. This can be accomplished easily by pinning several onto your hat.

As for noting the fish's weight, you can carry a small hand scale, either in your bag or in a pocket inside your top. In the case of small fish, I only take note of the length because a finely calibrated scale would be necessary to show any significant weight difference. I don't believe any scientific purpose is served, so accuracy is not that critical.

A set mark on your rod, say eighteen inches, will enable you to judge fairly accurately the length of the fish by placing one alongside the other.

After filing the pertinent data on the card corresponding with the tag, mail it back to the Society, and enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you've done a good deed. Further reward will possibly come in the months or years to come when a letter arrives at your home, with a small cloth patch signifying that your fish has been recaptured. If the second capture seals the fish's fate, take pride in the fact that you have given the fish another opportunity to spawn. You will also have provided a far-off angler the pleasure of a successful fishing trip.



SEAWEED & PLANKTON

BY FRED GUARDINEER

PLANTS GROWING IN THE OCEAN ARE REFERRED TO AS "SEAWEED", BUT ACTUALLY MANY ARE SEA VEGETABLES AND GOOD TO EAT AS THESE SHOWN.

FIR NEEDLE, CUT FROM ROCKS IN PACIFIC WATERS USED AS A GARNISH IN SOUPS.

GRAPESTONE, AN ANNUAL ATLANTIC & PACIFIC PLANT USED TO MAKE PUDDING.

IRISH MOSS, FOUND ON THE ATLANTIC COAST FLAVORS OUR SOUPS AND STEWS.

FINGERED TANGLE COMMONLY KNOWN AS KELP HAS PROTEIN AND VITAMINS.

PLANKTON IS THE TERM APPLIED COLLECTIVELY TO A GREAT VARIETY OF MINUTE PLANTS AND ANIMALS WHICH LIVE IN OCEANS, RIVERS, LAKES AND PONDS THE WORLD OVER. EVEN THE FRIGID ARCTIC AND ANTARCTIC SEAS AND THE DEEPEST DEPTHS OF THE OCEANS ARE HOME TO LARGE POPULATIONS OF PLANKTONIC ORGANISMS. THEY CAN ONLY BE SEEN UNDER A MICROSCOPE AND LOOK LIKE THESE EXAMPLES. PLANKTON IS LINK NO. 1 IN THE WORLDWIDE FOOD CHAIN.

Dressing for Winter Fishing

by Stewart S. Lilker

By the time you read this article the winter fishing season should be in full swing. From Montauk, Sheepshead Bay, Captree, and Freeport, the reports should be coming in of thirty and forty pound cod, pollack, full bags of whiting, and ling. Many anglers miss some of the best fighting and tastiest fish of the year while sitting in front of their television sets watching Saturday and Sunday afternoon football. Why? They say it's too cold out there—nonsense! With a little common sense and an understanding of what makes you cold, you can learn to dress warm and be ready to cash in on some of the best fishing of the year.

The first thing to remember when heading out on a winter fishing trip is that you are not trying to win a beauty contest. So leave your grandfather's old Buffalo coat and your wife's Mink coat at home. The Army has found in its survival experiments that a man can keep warm in temperatures down to sixty-five degrees below zero with only three pounds of clothing. How do they do it? By dressing smart.

Dressing smart means dressing for warmth, not weight. The weight of your clothing is not a factor in keeping you warm. It is the insulating ability of your clothes that keeps you warm. Trapped still air is an excellent insulator and it is the ability of what you wear to trap this still layer of air that is going to keep you warm. It's much better to dress with a number of lighter garments than one heavy one.

Now, let's get down to business and see what you should be wearing on a winter fishing expedition. I start out with a set of cotton long johns. I wear these long johns not for their warmth, but for their ability to absorb perspiration. It is important that you make some provision for your perspiration to be absorbed, because it is this moisture that will eventually chill you.

Over my long johns I wear a set of circular knit insulated underwear. I have found that these have a tendency to shrink in the wash regardless of what it says on the label, so it is best to buy them a size or two larger and save yourself a lot of aggravation later. There is nothing worse than starting the day by finding your clothes don't fit.

For my upper body, after the long johns and the long sleeve thermal undershirt, I put on a hooded thermal sweat shirt that has pockets and a front zipper. Over this I wear a thermal vest insulated with Dacron 88, which also has pockets. Finally comes my jacket, which is wind-proof and also insulated with Dacron 88.

To keep my legs warm, after the long johns and the circular knit thermals—depending on the weather, I then put on a pair of thermals quilted with Dacron 88. Over these goes a pair of dungarees.

Remember, the purpose of wearing many layers of clothing is to trap air. It is this layer of still air that is going to keep you warm. Therefore, your clothes must fit loosely. If they are tight and binding, not only will you feel uncomfortable, you will defeat the insulating qualities of your clothing and cut off your circulation at the same time. Cutting off your circulation will make you even colder.

You might be wondering why I haven't mentioned anything about goose down clothing up until now. Well, there is no doubt that goose down is still the efficient insulator around. Many of today's synthetics will give goose down a good run for the money, but when push comes to shove, I still think goose down has the edge. For the conditions one is most likely to encounter on Long Island's waters, "down" is really not necessary. Today's synthetics will keep you warm. For the price of a good down jacket, one can almost completely outfit himself for cold weather fishing using other garments. If you've got money to spare and goose down is your thing—beware! Down jackets are becoming quite popular and many manufacturers are stuffing their jackets with duck down, which is only about fifty percent as efficient an insulator as goose down. So read your labels and don't be fooled by pictures of a flock of geese hanging on a tag from the sleeve of a garment. Goose down is expensive, and if a manufacturer fills his garment with it, he will say so on the label sewn in the garment. A label that just reads "down" most likely isn't goose, but most probably duck. It might even be chicken down, and who wants to go out in the middle of the winter dressed in a bunch of chicken feathers?

No matter how warmly you're dressed, if you are not wind and waterproofed, you are likely to "freeze to death." A temperature of thirty degrees above zero with a freezing wind-driven rain is more to be feared than a windless day of thirty below zero. Wind and rain will rob most insulators of their effectiveness. It is quite simple to insulate yourself against wind and rain. Buy a set of top quality foul weather gear. This is one place you don't want to be penny wise and pound foolish. I have learned from experience that economy foul weather gear will not last. While $30 might seem an outrageous price to pay for a foul weather top or overalls, some manufacturers guarantee their garments for life. I used a hooded foul weather jacket with snaps in the front. The hood keeps the wind off my neck and the rain off my head. If I should find myself getting a little too warm, I undo a couple of snaps to get a little air circulating. I generally don't wear my foul weather overalls unless the wind is really howling or it's raining. But for those of you who get cold no matter what you seem to wear—wear your overalls. You will be pleasantly surprised at how much warmer you will be.

The old-timer who said, "If your feet are cold, put on your hat," knew what he was talking about. Hats are not optional in cold weather! Because the brain is a vital organ in most of us, the blood vessels in your head and neck do not constrict to conserve heat, as they do in the extremities. On a cold day you can easily lose fifty percent of the heat your body produces from your head. During the winter, whether fishing or not, I always wear a woolen ski cap when I'm outdoors. The beauty of a ski cap is that if your ears get cold, you can always pull it down over them. The thermal hood on my sweat shirt and the wind and waterproof hood on my foul weather gear will protect my neck and head, while giving me the flexibility to deal with extreme cold, wind, freezing rain or snow.

A pair of loafers and a thin pair of socks don't belong on your feet during a winter fishing trip. Once your feet are cold or damp, you are going to feel uncomfortable no matter how warmly you're dressed. The easiest, but also the most expensive way to insulate your feet against the elements is to go out and buy a top quality pair of thermal boots. I saved over half the cost by buying a pair of snowmobile boots. These boots consist of an outer shell that is both wind and waterproof and a removable inner shell of woolen

felt.

Before putting my boots on, I start by putting on a pair of cotton socks to absorb the perspiration. I then put on the felt liners, followed by the outer boots. If you're the type whose feet always get cold no matter what kind of footwear you are wearing, you can put on a pair of woolen socks before you put on the felts. This combination should keep your feet pleasantly warm. Whatever you decide to buy, make sure to stay away from the economy thermal boots that you see advertised. All of the ones I've seen are cut much too narrow and will cut off your circulation. Once this happens, your feet will feel cold no matter how many pairs of socks you put on.

Keeping your hands warm is not the easiest thing in the world to accomplish on a winter fishing trip. The least satisfactory glove is the five-fingered one. With these, your fingers stand alone in the breeze like five cooling fins. The best I have been able to come up with is the three-fingered, foam insulated rubber mitten. I generally use these with thermal liners and they do a pretty good job of keeping my hands warm in the coldest weather. The three-finger configuration gives me enough dexterity to bait up without removing my gloves. Unfortunately, for most tangles your bare hands will be the only way out. I always bring along a couple of pairs of extra liners. This way, in case one pair gets wet, I'll have dry gloves in no time.

The time to make sure everything fits and that your zippers zip and your snaps snap is in the store—not on the fishing grounds. A zipper or snap that doesn't function properly in the store is not going to mysteriously repair itself. If your clothes are binding in the try-on room, they are not going to loosen up on the way to the fishing grounds.

My jacket, hooded sweat shirt, and thermal vest all have pockets and zippers for good reason. The pockets are great for storing things like sinkers, cigarettes, matches, and candy bars. The zippers allow me to ventilate myself if I feel I'm getting too warm. When I go into the boat's cabin it takes me no time at all to unzip and make myself comfortable.

If you plan to do a lot of winter fishing, it might be a good idea to look into one of the high quality snow-mobile suits that are on the market. A good one will cost you about $100 and some manufacturers guarantee them to keep you warm in temperatures down to forty degrees below zero.

Now is the time to cash in on some of the best fishing of the season. Remember to dress smart—dress for warmth, not weight, and you will be able to stand by the rail in any conditions you're likely to encounter. So pull yourself away from your television set, suit up, and I'll see you out on the water.

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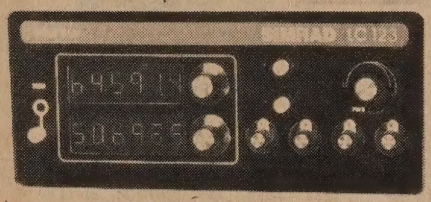

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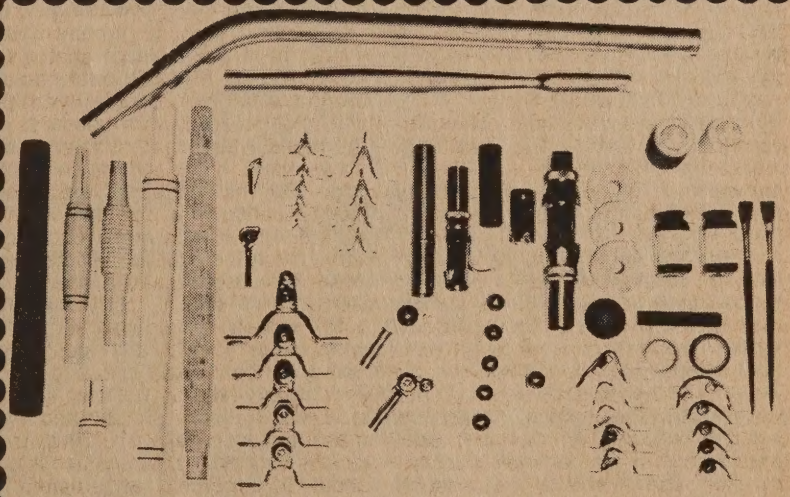

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ROD BUILDING

Part One—*The Blank*

by Dr. William A. Muller

Before we get down to the "nitty-gritty" of making the rod, we should give some consideration as to why we plan to make, or why we are thinking about making a rod. Although there are many considerations, one of the most important reasons is the most practical of all. In today's world of sophisticated technology, it is hard to buy a better rod than those that are produced by quality manufacturers. However, how many can we afford to buy? A good rod may cost as much as several hundred dollars or as little as fifty or sixty dollars, but regardless of whether it is a simple boat rod or an extravagant offshore rod, quality costs.

Exceptionally good rods can also be purchased from local tackle stores, but again you get what you pay for and you cannot expect a skilled craftsman to put together a quality piece of fishing equipment for you for peanuts. Nonetheless, soon or later in our fishing careers we realize the shortcomings of inexpensive tackle and we begin to look around for something better. This search leads us either to a quality manufacturer or our local tackle shop. But how many Christmas and birthday rods can we expect?

One of the most common questions that I am asked about rods is the question that is most impossible to answer. Many fishermen are looking for the one rod that they can use for all purposes and such an animal simply does not exist. For those who valiantly insist that it does, comes the frustration of using the wrong tackle in the wrong place almost all of the time. Is there an alternative? Sure, and it is a lot simpler than you might imagine. Most serious fishermen that I know own and use between a dozen and fifty different outfits. That may sound a bit outrageous, but let's do a little addition. Let's assume that you, like me, fish both from boats and in the surf. You will need a big surf spinning rod for throwing big lures, a big conventional for heaving bait, a nine or ten foot spinning rod for semi-quiet waters, a light action one-handed spinning rod for quiet waters where weaks and school bass may be the quarry; a good bait casting rod is a delight when fine control is required for small game, and a fly rod isn't a bad idea for those summer evenings when the fish can only be fooled by the smallest lures. For the boat we'll need a couple of light action conventionals for flounder, porgies, and small fluke. A stiff spinning rod may also be useful when heavy bucktails or other weighty lures have to be used; several stiff jigging rods are a must for the dual purposes of diamond jigging and ocean bottom fishing, a couple of trolling rods should be included for those days when only wire line will do, and if you are an offshore fisherman a few heavy duty outfits will be required to tame sharks and tuna.

So let's add it up. Even this abbreviated list comes to fourteen rods! So, I guess what I'm saying is that after the first couple of professionally-made rods that you buy, why not make a few. It's fun and easy and you'll have the tremendous satisfaction of catching fish on a piece of equipment that you made yourself.

However, if this were the only reason for making your own rod, I doubt that most people would make the effort. Many anglers look upon rod making as a winter hobby. Each fall they survey their equipment and determine which rods need repair, which should be replaced, and what new rods might improve the quality of their fishing. Thus, they are able to plan out some winter-time activities that will help prevent cabin fever, keep them out of arguments with the wife, and stimulate the mind during the empty winter months.

Perhaps you'll make a rod as a gift for a friend or relative. Imagine the look on a youngster's face when you present him or her with a rod that you made yourself, especially for them. Then, too, making your own rod is often the only way that you can guarantee that the rod will possess certain qualities that you believe are important for the way that you fish. You can also add your own hardware and put personalized decorative touches to the finished product that will add enjoyment and quality.

Have I convinced you to make a rod? Good. Then let's get down to basics and get started. How to select the rod blank? There are a number of quality Fiberglas rod blank manufacturers. These companies either produce the product for the manufacture of their own brand name product—such as Shakespeare, Fenwick and Orvis—or they ship to other companies that use the basic blank to manufacture a finished rod: Lamiglass is an example. However, because there is a demand for rod blanks across the country, many companies make the blanks available to distributors who, in turn, sell them to local tackle stores and sporting goods stores. Rod blanks are numbered by the company according to size and action. However, each company uses its own system and except for the most experienced rod maker, most of the numbers have very little relevance. In the last part of this series, we will offer several examples complete with blank numbers so that you will have a place to start. However, it is much more important that you understand how to pick out a blank on the basis of potential utility and inherent characteristics. That will be our purpose here.

We will discuss the following factors that we should consider when selecting a rod blank: tip action, power, length, style, our physical build, and whether we prefer a one-piece or two-piece rod.

Physical Build: This factor becomes important only when a rod is going to be made for the purpose of casting—whether it be for surf or boat. Although it is not a hard and fast rule, smaller people, whether they are women, children, or small men, have more difficulty with a very large and heavy surf stick. Perhaps an eleven-foot stick can be just as serviceable to you as a fourteen footer. If the caster is not comfortable with a certain rod, distance casting will not be achieved regardless of the size of the rod. It is very important that the rod coordinates with your body. Although we tend to see people as very similar, we not only come in all sizes, but shapes as well. Some folks have short arms or legs and others have small hands, or large powerful hands. Regardless of whether the rod will be used from the boat or surf, the angler can only achieve enjoyment and utility out of a rod that is matched to their body measurements, as well as to the conditions and job to be done.

One-Piece or Two-Piece: There was a time when two-piece rods were weaker than one-piece rods. That is less true today, and a fisherman can expect the same service out of both, with a few exceptions. It would be foolish to construct a two-piece fourteen-foot surf rod that is designed to throw heavy lures or bait. It has been my experience that the stresses that are generated by tossing four-ounce lures or half-pound chunks of bait again and again tend to produce cracks along the edge of the ferrule and, therefore, should be avoided.

The biggest reason for using two-piece rods is the convenience both for storage and travel. You'll not find too many airlines that would be willing to ship a ten-foot stick, but they will handle a two-piece rod in an everyday fashion. Apartment dwellers find that large one-piece rods are a problem and prefer to be able to store them in closets.

Spinning or Conventional: Spinning rods are great, but they are not a panacea for all fishing methods. I frankly am surprised by sinker bouncers who state that they prefer spinning for species like flounder, fluke, porgies, etc. I can't buy it! There is nothing like a conventional outfit for this type of bottom fishing, as well as diamond jigging and codfishing. Spinning comes into its own when the fisherman intends to do a lot of casting. Spinning offers the angler almost backlash-free casting with ease and efficiency. Thus, if the rod is intended for casting from a boat for any of a number of species, or if the rod will be used in the surf where a guy may stand and cast for hours, you can't beat the ease of spinning tackle.

Length: I wish that I had a dollar for every angler that I have seen with a rod that was either too short or too long for the job. If a fisherman uses a rod that is too short when long casts and leverage are needed, the chances are that the fisherman will fall short of a productive day. Then, too, a long casting rod on a small boat results in difficult casting, broken tips, bent guides, and "hot" tempers. Before you select a blank give some thought to the purpose for which it is intended. If the only way that you can get the kind of action you want is to purchase a long rod, then cut the butt off so that the length will match the criteria of your fishing conditions. In general, basic guidelines can be offered. Consult the following table.

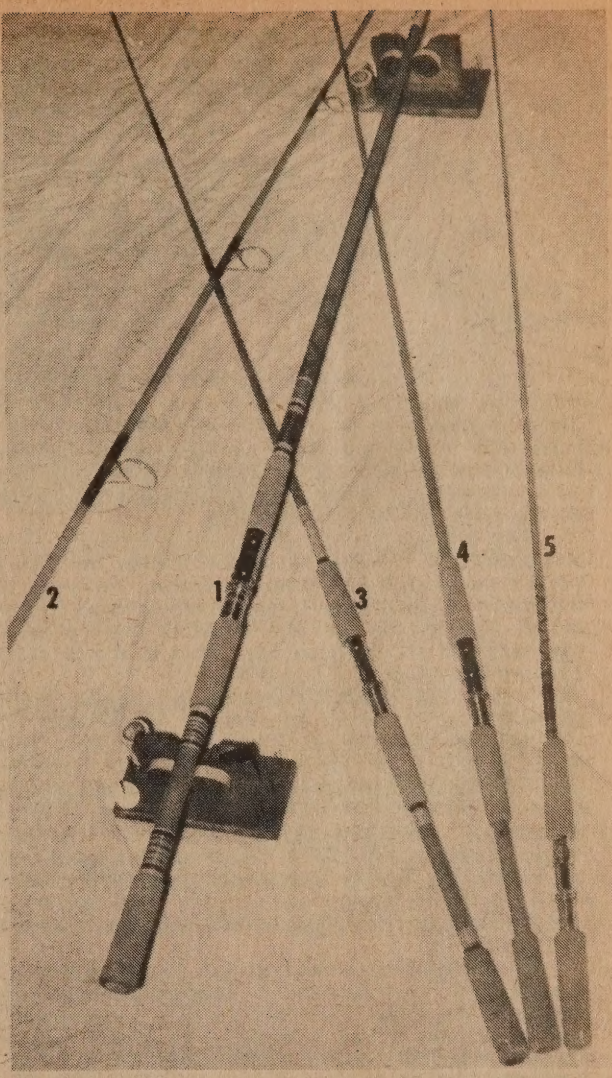
CASTING	NON-CASTING	LENGTH (ft.)
Surf - Ocean		11-14
Surf - Sounds and Bays		9-11
Surf - Quiet water light		7-9
Boat - light		6-7
Boat - Medium		7-8
	Bottom - light	6-7
	Bottom - heavy	7-8
	Jigging	7-8
	Trolling	6-8

These are very general guidelines, but they will get you thinking in the right direction.

Action: The action of a rod reflects the way it bends. That is, what percentage of the rod's length bends under stress. The greater percentage of the rod that bends, the longer it will take to spring back to its original position. Thus, the action of a rod also reflects its speed of recoil. Only the tip bends on extra-fast action rods. About one-third the rod bends with fast action, one-half the rod's length bends with medium action, and a rod with a slow action bends along most of its length. Although fast-tip action rods were the vogue some years ago, more and more fishermen prefer medium and slow action rods today because they require less effort to cast, casting timing is less precise, and on large rods more thrust can be generated to send large lures sailing over the briny.

The action of a rod blank can be determined by holding the butt against your abdominal wall and whipping the rod gently back and forth parallel to the floor. The angler can thus see how much of the rod's length is bending.

Power: Most fishermen equate the term "power" with a rod's ability to cast large lures or to whip large fish. Actually, although the power of a rod blank bears some relationship to these two items, it is better to think of rod power in terms of the weight and wall thickness of the rod and the range of weights that it is designed to cast or handle. To explain that further: a whippy rod will beat or tire a fish faster than a stiff one, but a stiff one will be able to turn a fish, whereas the angler with a whippy rod may have to use guile instead of brute strength. Consider the following very general table.



1. **Slow action 11½ ft. surf rod.**
2. **Fast action 10½ ft. surf rod.**
3. **Medium fast action 7 ft. casting rod.**
4. **Medium action 7 ft. casting rod.**
5. **Slow action, light 7 ft. casting rod.**

POWER	RECOMMENDED LURE WEIGHTS (oz)
Ultra-light	up to 1/8
Light	up to 1/2
Medium	3/8 to 1
Heavy (Surf)	3 - 6
Heavy (boat)	up to 80 lb. test

Final Considerations: There are several things that the blank selector must also keep in mind. One, the finished rod will be heavier than the blank itself. Before you are done you will add ferrules, guides, windings, reel seats, and a tiptop. Second, the addition of guides and windings may change the action just a bit. Third, if you take a one-piece blank and convert it into a two-piece you will lose some of the blank's flexibility—especially in the middle. Fourth, the finished rod need not be the length of the original blank. It can be cut from either the butt or the tip. Cutting the tip will diminish action, while cutting from the butt will make the rod shorter and you will lose some amount of the blank's power.

Next Week: Grips, guides, ferrules, tiptops, and reel seats.

PLASTIC WORMS

by Dick Mermon

Practically all fishermen are notorious gadget collectors, especially when it comes to lures. If the imitation appeals to an angler's inner feelings, it will at least catch something—you. Most artificials marketed today succeed in capturing one type fish or another, found on land as well as in water. I, too, must admit being caught several times by dazzling attractors.

Twenty years ago one lure in particular caught my eye and pocketbook. It looked reasonably lifelike, felt natural, but had a strange aroma: it was a sea worm imitation. Not that the scent was offensive, but something about it turned me off. Through the eyes of a fisherman this replica of a marine worm should have been able to fool a simple creature like a fish, if it duped me.

I still feel guilty that I didn't apply lengthy experimentation when the rubber worm was first introduced by Nick Creme, Creme Lure Company, Tyler, Texas, in 1957. At that time, I was oblivious of the worm's potential in saltwater. Other anglers like myself probably acquired the imitation and without using it in proper perspective, just discarded the worm with the other people-catching lures. Bait at that time was a winner, so I stayed with the winner, even though there were occasions when sea worms became scarce. I had convinced myself that if fish refused native baits why should they assault an imitation?

On the few times when I actually inserted a hook into the soft worm, its permanent "S" shape caused a spinning motion in the water. Even when trolled in combination with a spinner, it had a tendency to rotate. Finally I became disgusted with the whole idea of using a rubber band-like lure and switched back to other imitations: bucktails, diamond jigs, and a weighted surgical tube called "The Gizmo." These had true fish appeal and not human appeal.

If you think that striped bass anglers are device conscious, then I believe you had better have second thoughts on the subject. Largemouth bass fishermen are far more aware of gadgets to arrest their quarry. They never permit a new addition to the tackle box to pass into collection without first wetting it thoroughly. Bass tournaments all over the United States have proven this point by the variation of lures each angler carries.

Birth of what is the largest mass-produced and most popular lure in the country, began as a cleverly designed eight inch, solid red, shoelace style, soft plastic worm. It was merely pencil shaped and about as thick. Simple in design, inexpensive to produce and the most unnatural looking bait to a human, the lure struck pay dirt with freshwater anglers.

From its straight, tube shape came various forms with flat, curly, split, forked and whatever-else-shaped tails. In time they grew from tiny, two-inch tidbits to hawg teasers of fifteen inches and thumb thickness. Even now the Texans crow about their so-called "bucketmouths" and a five-foot plastic worm is manufactured to scare the fish to death.

About six years ago, I began a trial-and-error method with these soft worms in saltwater. If they worked in freshwater, why should they not entice salty critters? Fish are fish, and have no reasoning powers. By this time the Alou Eel had established itself in the saltwater market and was catching stripers, blues, and some weakfish. The Alou lure was designed primarily with these species in mind, but it also had an effect on southern kingfish, cobia, barracuda, tuna, and a few other sub-tropical marine fish.

Along about this same period, sea worms in the northeastern states developed not only an inflation price decrease, but shrunk in size. This is what really convinced me in finding a substitute bait or lure in place of natural worms. So entered into the scene of saltwater angling "The Plastic Worm."

Today these soft imitations come in a wide array of sizes, shapes, colors, and textures. Almost every marine fish has the capability to destroy a rubber worm with one bite. Hence, texture must be taken into consideration; yet the lure must have enough elasticity for proper wiggle and buoyancy.

Prior to this year, three manufactured worms seem to have made an impression—Mann's Jelly Worm, Mister Twister's Phenom, and Creme's Shimmy series. Lindy Tails or Fliptails are soft textured with great action, but are easily cut.

Gradual increased demand among saltwater anglers for this rubber shoelace type lure, demanded a new strain of plastic worm, and one that would resist mistreatment by sharp-mouthed fish. So a modern sea worm has arrived from Massachusetts called the Indian Scent Worm. This creation has a center core of nylon mesh, preventing the lure from splitting, or an almost indestructible worm.

Some other plastic worm manufacturers, which number about sixty-five throughout the country are Boone Bait Co., Rebel, Bagley, Burke, Bass Finder, Sweet-Willie, Ding-a-Ling, Action Lure, Spring Serpent, and you—John Doe Public.

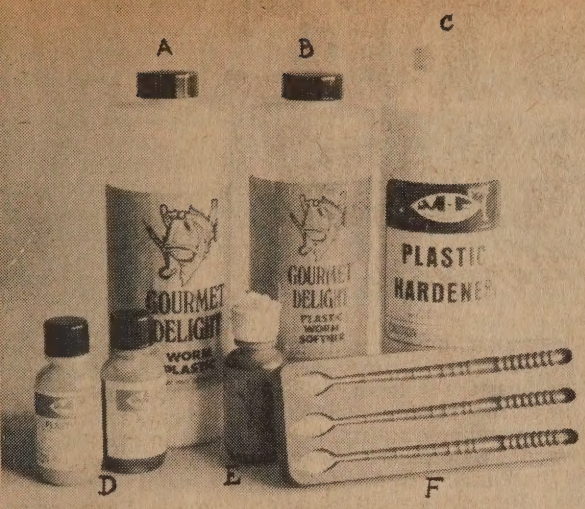
If you relish tinkering with do-it-yourself lures, there are materials available to produce these worms at a reasonable cost. Merrick Marine, Bellmore, N.Y., has a large selection of bottled white goo, hardener, softener, colors, worm oils, and molds. Everyone knows how simple it is to assemble a child's toy these days. Well, plastic worms can be reproduced with the same simplicity when the knack of pouring is learned. Once the desired hardness, softness, or color is achieved, the next step is to become familiar with cooking plastic. This home rubber worm manufacturing system is similar to a youth molding kit, which was called "Creepy Crawlers." Personally, my vote goes to buying plastic worms in quantity from a dealer in preference to this time-consuming diversion. Furthermore, I never did get the hang of being able to pour molten liquid into a tiny crevice without spilling some.

Strange as it may be, color of a synthetic worm does make a difference at times, especially with respect to water conditions, depth and clarity. Black ranks high on the list, then red or purple. This past year, brown was the preferred tone in clear water.

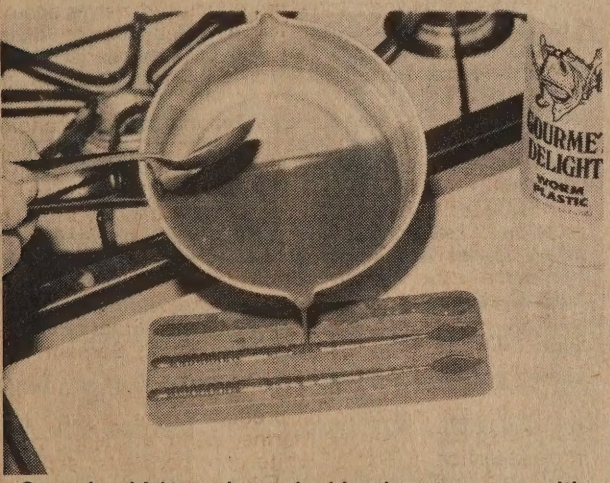
Angling style depends upon the species of fish sought. When fishing in freshwater for largemouth bass, there are two methods that anglers choose—Texas rig or weighted weedless hook. Texas-fashioned worms were developed in that State and are so labeled. This method is also suitable in saltwater, especially when drifting or working weedy locations along flats or channels where sea cabbage or eel grass gather. The hooked worm is weedless and snag-proof, but the bullet-shaped weight leadhead may be a culprit of foul play.

Line is passed through the tiny hole of the leadhead of the bullet's point and out the back where either the special

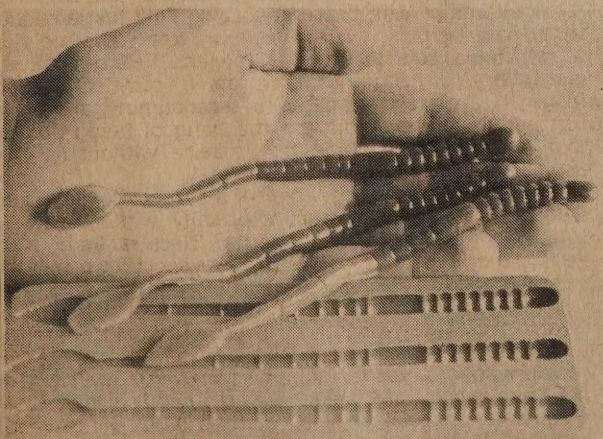
(Continued on next page.)



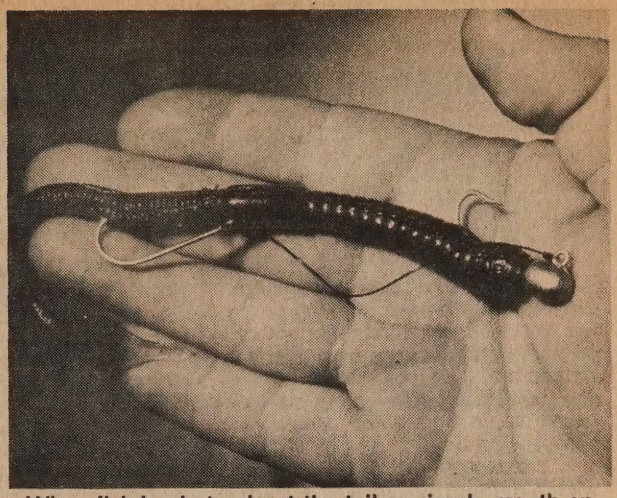
Materials required for a home-factory plastic worm production line consists of: A. the plastic liquid; B. a bottle of liquid softener; C. liquid hardener; D. color dye; E. worm oil; F. the worm mold.



Once the thickness is reached by the worm goo, with color and softener or hardener added, it takes a steady hand to pour into the cavity mold. A special pour-spout pot is used for this step.



The finished product looks exactly like what the mold has formed. As soon as the worm cools and is taken from the mold, it should be placed into a pan of cold water for further hardening. After it is cooled and dried, the indented rubber worm can be coated with anise oil for lubrication or scent of one kind or another.



When fish begin to nip at the tail or simply mouth an imitation, a stinger hook must be employed as shown.

Some of the many weights, styles, and shapes that can be used to give a plastic worm action and weedless hook attachments.

Ron Bauer unhooks a small weakfish that took a 9 inch Mann's Jelly worm. A non-believer in the lure quickly changed his mind and switched.

(Continued from preceding page.)

worm hook or a stainless steel hook is attached. The hook size will vary depending upon the worm's length. After the line is attached, the hook's point is pressed into the worm's head up to the barb and then out its body. It is then slid onto the hook's eye and twisted about so the point can be placed back into the worm. At this time, the point of the hook is inserted up to the barb. The entire lure must be rigged straight or it will spin when retrieved. The leadhead's weight depends upon current and depth of water being fished.

A weighted weedless worm rig is one in which the lead weight is pre-molded onto the hook's shank and is embedded in the worm's body. The hook's point and barb are exposed and protected by a thin, flexible piece of spring wire. It is fashioned in such a way that when a fish strikes the lure, the wire springs open and the point penetrates the flesh. This style of weedless rig is really not essential and could be discarded for an exposed point set-up.

The simplest method of rigging a soft plastic worm is with a nude leadhead jig. In most cases this lure will be retrieved along a bottom which is free of obstacles. Therefore, it does not require a weedless style hook. The worm is threaded as before, but instead of coming directly out again, the point passes inside the body for about the full length of the hook's shank, then is brought out. Most leadheads have a slight extension where the hair is attached. This extension is always forced into the worm and acts as a barrier preventing the worm from sliding downward or away from the head.

Occasionally I found by adding an action type head such as Tri-Fin, or an Alou-shaped "S" in place of a rounded one produced quicker strikes. Even small tin squids, which are used when weakfishing, increase the swaying motion of the lure.

Recently a new formed leadhead was featured in fresh water bass jigging. It is called a "stand-up jig" head, where it elevated the worm in a vertical position on bottom. This new design not only prevented a lure from snagging, but created the action of a worm searching for a burrowing place.

Bizarre as it is, fish assault a plastic worm head first, or inhale the entire lure wholly. They usually do not peck at its tail section. Only small fish are tail-nippers. Even fluke will attack plastic worms headlong. The only reason for this is possibly a predator may think the worm is about to bury itself and get away. They know striking its head kills the bait instantly.

There are periods when some fish become touchy in pursuit of food, simply mouthing the offering, or chopping it in two at mid-section. During this time, a stinger hook should be used in the lure's lower end by means of a small length of monofilament secured to the jig's eye. With enough slack in the mono, a secondary hook will not affect the lure's swaggering action.

These soft lengthy imitations can be used in several different angling methods. Unlike a shrimp tail, the worm is not jigged or twitched, but simply lifted off bottom. Its long, slender body and tail creates a swashbuckling effect, and when given slack will descend in the same motion.

Crawling a worm permits it to slither or roll with a current. Once cast out it is allowed to settle on bottom. Now the worm is granted slack line to wiggle and roll with the tidal movement. Only occasionally is loose line retrieved and the lure lifted from bottom, but quickly returned again when no strike occurs. Sea worms, native to our shores, work along with a current in this way and quickly try to bury themselves upon sighting a predator.

Rubber worms can be fished anywhere and from any position. There are places where a weightless imitation must be used, or one that should be drifted by means of a leader secured three feet from the sinker. All that is required is to place the hook into the tip of the worm, sliding it up the shank and out past the barb. Current will create most of the action needed and carry it along.

The object that must be remembered is to concentrate upon the circumstances at hand and apply proper technique for each location and situation. If one method fails, try another. If that fails, do not forsake the rig—change color, size or tail shape. Worms are worms and are natural forage. In all water some variety or species of slender prey exists. It may not only resemble a native worm, but could imitate a sand eel, or some other shaped object to eat.

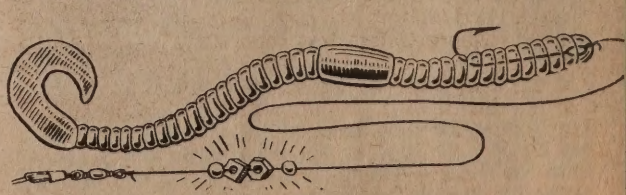
I have utilized these lures in saltwater from the Virgin Islands to the Keys and up into Massachusetts, catching a wide variety of fish. The one fish that almost had me stumped was a winter flounder. Even though they feed on tiny sea worms, these flatties refused my imitations. After several years of constant failure, I struck upon the solution and why it was difficult to catch them on artificials. This species requires scent or aroma of a bait. Even yellow plastic strips, cut from larger worms were refused. By some means I had to add scent to the lure. So in desperation, after threading a two-inch red imitation on a flounder hook, I tipped it with a tiny section of bloodworm and caught a flounder. Whenever there was no natural bait on the hook, the flatfish shied away. I even watched this action in a shallow flat when the water was clear. Hence, I saturated a dozen of these tiny rubber worms in a jar of clam juice for two months and caught flounders this past fall.

After going through all this trouble and thinking I had a secret, somebody comes along with a manufactured scent of clams, sea worms, squid, and earthworms, which is applied directly to the worm. It is mass-produced by Indian Scent Company, Depot Street, Uxbridge, Massachusetts who says, "scent is the secret" and I now believe it to be true. It gives a lure the omitted element—smell.

Let me inject one final certainty about synthetic worms. They can be carried anywhere, any time and in any worm-proof pouch, box or pocket without fear of decomposing. The fact is they have image, texture, and now scent appeal for true realism. What was once monopolized by freshwater anglers is available to everyone.

Listed here are some of the worm manufacturers in the United States and addresses where catalogs may be obtained.

Mann's Lure Co., P. O. Box 604, Eufaula, Alabama 36027.
T&M Bass Products, 3699 Kirk Rd., Lake Worth, Florida, 33461.
Creme Lure Co., P. O. Box 87, Dept. AA-2, Tyler, Texas 75701.
Burke Lure Co., 1969 South Airport, Traverse City, Mi. 49684.
Lindy Tails, Box 27, Isle, Minnesota 56342.
Rebel Lures, 3601 Jenny Lind Rd., Ft. Smith, Ar. 72901.
Ridge Runner Lures, 5025 Flournoy Lucas Rd., Shreveport, La.
Indian Lure & Scent Co., Uxbridge, Ma. 01569.
Mister Twister, P.O. Drawer 996, Dept. AA, Minden, La. 71055.
Sweet Willie, J.W. Lures, P.O. Box 1374, Jacksonville, Fla. 32201.
Action Lures, P.O. Box 10529, Jackson, MS. 39209.
Cordell Tackle Co., P.O. Box 2020, Hot Springs, AR. 71901.
Bass Buster, Inc., Box 118, Amsterdam, Missouri 64723.
Fleck, 2728 7th Ave. So., Birmingham, Alabama 35233.
Boone Bait Co., Inc., P.O. Box 4009, Winter Park, Fla. 32793.
Salty Dog, Jim Bagley Bait Co., Inc., P.O. Box 110, Winter Haven, Fla. 33880.



SOUTH SHORE Fishing Report

MONTAUK

Capt. Paul Forsberg of the **Viking Fishing Fleet** reported that the cod and pollack fishing has been very, very good south of Block Island in the Shark's Ledge area. The cod are averaging 10 to 18 lbs., and the pool fish is usually over 35 lbs. The big pollack mixed in the catch adds up to some great fishing.

Capt. Richard Rade of the **Marlin IV** gave us a call while we were on vacation to let us know that the codfishing is now very good in the Shark's Ledge area. The fish are all sizes and there are quite a few pollack mixed in with them.

Capt. Artie Gerstmann of the charter boat **Bumble Bee** called to say that he fished with two friends one day during Christmas week and bagged 32 cod in only a few hours of fishing around Shark's Ledge. Artie said that the boat is still in the water and he will continue to take cod charters as long as the weather holds. This is the only charter boat we know of, except for **Triton II** that is still taking charters at Montauk. If you want to get in on this good fishing, give Capt. Artie a call at 516-324-2928.

Capt. John Sweetman of the charter boat **Ebb Tide** dropped in to the L.I.F. Offices in Sag Harbor to say that the boats sailing are having some excellent codfishing south of Block Island, with plenty of big pollack mixed in the catches. John said that the Ebb Tide will start sailing again for cod and pollack on the first weekend in April and he is now accepting all types of charters for the 1978 season.

CAPTREE

Capt. Neil Delanoy of the charter boat **Lady Ann** reported that the codfishing on the south shore has been fair to poor. Neil said that the fishing thus far has been worse than last year and everyone is disgusted. A sprinkling of cod are being taken on open bottom in 130 ft. of water southeast of the NB buoy. The wrecks are virtually lifeless. The Captain said that some of the best cod catches have been taken off Moriches Inlet in 90 ft. of water, and whiting are starting to show in inshore waters less than 90 ft., east of Fire Island Inlet. Neil said that the **Lady Ann** is now accepting charters for the 1978 fishing season. Book early for choice dates.

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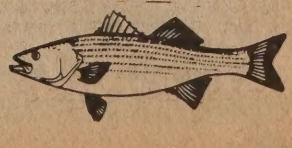

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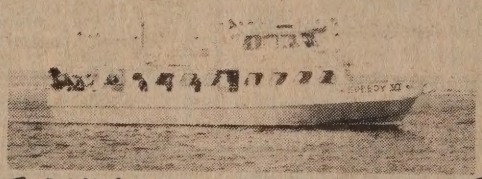

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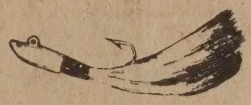

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NORTH SHORE Fishing Report

SELDEN

The Anglers Den reported excellent codfishing out at Montauk since the last report. Two customers were out on the "Viking Starship" last week and got between 15 and 20 cod each. Also last week, Frank from **The Angler's Den South** got 50 cod up to 20 lbs. There are plenty of pollack out there as well, with a lot of them in the 30'. Some customers are getting some school bass that are wintering over at the Lilco plant.

KATONAH, N.Y.

Bob's Tackle Shop reported the ice last week was thick enough to safely fish through it. Jim Horne caught a 2 lb. 12 oz. trout at Cross River. Bob DeHollander caught pickerel of 3 and 4 lbs. on both lures and live bait at Peach Lake. Pete Gentalen caught a 5 and ¼ lb. brown at Muscoot Reservoir. Tony from the shop mentioned that there were a lot of yellow perch between 1 and 2 lbs., caught through the ice last week.

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N.Y. BIGHT Fishing Report

FREEPORT

Capt. Richie of the **Starstream II** reports that codfishing was slow over the weekend. On Friday, four cod were taken 3-4 miles west of the NB buoy. The fish ran up to 30 lbs. On Monday, the high winds sent the boat into dock early in the day.

The **Capt. Al** reports that bad weather has been destroying hopes of cod so far. A couple of big fish have come in when the weather is good. Friday and Saturday night showed good whiting and ling fishing thirty-five minutes from the dock in the inlet. Catches were mostly whiting from one to three pounds, with 60-100 fish per person being taken.

SHEEPSHEAD BAY

The **New Eagle** reports that Friday night showed good catches of whiting and ling at the BA buoy. The whiting averaged 1 to 1½ lbs., and ling ran up to 6 lbs. As long as the condition were good at night, the boat has been coming up with good catches. On Saturday average catches of a pail of whiting and ling were taken at the BA buoy. On Monday, high winds slowed fishing. One-half pail of whiting and ling were taken fishing south to the Klondike area.

The **Blue Sea III** reports that he has been fishing southwest of the NB buoy at the wreck on Wednesdays and took 9 cod to 38½ lbs., two weeks ago and six fish from 25 to 27 lbs. this past week.

The **Atomic II** reports that on Saturday all the fish you wanted could be taken from the Ambrose area. Catches averaged 50 to 80 nice whiting and ling per person. On Monday catches of up to 30 to 50 fish were taken at Ambrose. The catches were mostly whiting up to 2 lbs.

On the left is August Nataitis with a 51 lb. cod and on his right is Carl Westphal with a 50 pounder. Both men from Jersey fished on the Viking Starship out of Montauk.

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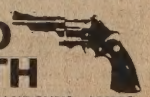

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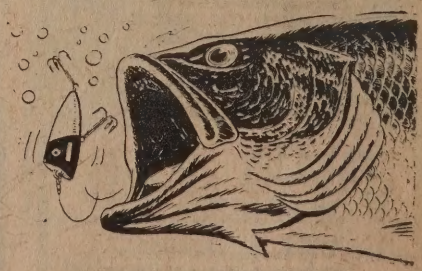

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